

# THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

**INSIDE**

Retail giants cut-throat competition  
spurs holiday job speedup

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VOL. 81/NO. 46 DECEMBER 11, 2017

## *SWP expands reach of party, 'Militant' in working class*

BY MARY MARTIN

The Socialist Workers Party has completed a successful fall *Militant* subscription, book and party fund drive. Members and supporters took the party's newspaper and books by SWP leaders deeper into working-

## **SWP 'MILITANT' FUND DRIVES GO OVER TOP**

class neighborhoods in cities large and small across the country.

SWP and Communist League members and supporters in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom signed up 1,582 new and renewing readers to the *Militant*, going over the goal of 1,500. Although we fell 60 books short of the quota we sold 1,440 titles, most of them with subscriptions and a smaller number without.

We come out of the drive knowing more people who are interested in working with us. The economic and political crisis of the capitalist rul-  
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### **Fall campaign to sell *Militant* subscriptions and books - Final chart**

Sept. 16 - Nov 21

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold
<b>UNITED STATES</b>				
Albany	95	100	95	96
Atlanta	85	94	85	87
Chicago	115	120	115	117
Colorado	30	20	30	29
Lincoln	30	28	30	25
Los Angeles	135	133	135	90
Miami	45	36	45	47
New York	180	183	180	153
Oakland	125	140	135	141
Philadelphia	70	71	70	71
Seattle	105	111	105	75
Twin Cities	75	78	75	85
Washington	80	87	80	71
Total U.S.	1,170	1,201	1,180	1,087
Prisoners	20	30		
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>				
London	65	76	65	78
Manchester	60	67	60	62
Total U.K.	125	143	125	140
<b>CANADA</b>				
Montreal	60	54	60	74
Vancouver	45	49	45	47
Total Canada	105	103	105	121
New Zealand	50	58	50	53
Australia	45	47	45	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>1,582</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>1,440</b>
<b>SHOULD BE</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>

## 'Militant' fights prison censorship in Florida

'Danger to all who support freedom of speech'



Florida prison officials impounded Nov. 6 issue of the *Militant*, above, accusing it of encouraging "riot, insurrection." Among articles and ads were ones promoting Idaho silver miners strike solidarity rally, above right, and protests against U.S. embargo of Cuba.

BY SETH GALINSKY

In an escalation of their violations of the constitutional rights of both the *Militant* and its subscribers behind bars, Florida prison officials have impounded nine issues of the paper so far this year. That's nearly as many as the four previous years combined!

And unlike most previous attempts by Florida authorities to block the *Militant*, which singled out one or another article, the latest attempt alleges that the paper itself "encourages protesting and group disruption."

Almost all the impoundments from 2013 to 2016 were overturned when the *Militant* challenged them. But so far this year, the Florida prison sys-

tems' Literature Review Committee has upheld nearly half.

David Goldstein, the *Militant*'s attorney from the prominent constitutional rights law firm Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky and Lieberman, informed the committee that the paper is challenging the prison's censorship. Already supporters of freedom of the press and the po-  
Continued on page 2

## Zimbabwe coup takes place amid Beijing rivalry with Washington

BY TERRY EVANS

In the midst of economic crisis and political infighting, the Zimbabwean military forced the resignation of long-standing President Robert Mugabe. Ruling party Zanu-PF leader Emmerson Mnangagwa assumed the presidency Nov. 24. The Chinese government, a longtime backer of the Mugabe regime, said nothing to oppose his ouster.

Mnangagwa urged Washington and other imperialist powers to lift sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe after the Mugabe government transferred many large capitalist farms into the hands of Zanu-PF supporters in the early 2000s. These sanctions have been continually renewed since then. Mnangagwa said his government would compensate former landowners for the land seizures, but not overturn them. He assured foreign capitalists that their investments in Zimbabwe would be untouched.

When the Zimbabwean people ended white-minority rule and won independence in 1980 they inherited an economy misshaped to accommodate Britain's extraction of raw materials and dumping of excess cheap products.

On top of this, working people  
Continued on page 7

## Seeds of more conflict built into new stage of Syria, Iraq wars

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The six-year civil war in Syria that grew out of the Bashar al-Assad regime's brutal crackdown on mass mobilizations calling for his downfall in 2011 is winding down. At the same time, the reactionary Islamic State outfit is being pushed out of their remaining territory in Syria and Iraq, reduced to a terrorist band.

Washington — with military bases and tens of thousands of troops and substantial air power in the region — is seeking to continue to defend its imperialist interests in these changing circumstances. Millions of Syrian toilers have borne the brunt of the conflict, with over half the population driven from their homes, some 400,000 killed and some still under siege by Assad's forces.

Moscow's intervention and relentless air war against rebel forces, along with substantial forces on the ground from Tehran and its allied Hezbollah militias, has consolidated Assad's rule over a half of Syria. One-third of the country was wrested from Islamic State and is now in the hands of Kurdish forces and the Syrian Democratic

Forces, a mix of Arab and Kurdish fighters led by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), with the backing of Washington. Anti-Assad rebels still control areas in Idlib and Aleppo provinces and in neighborhoods under siege around Damascus.

Moscow, with the collaboration of Ankara and Tehran, and tacit backing  
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19 victims of cop frame-ups exonerated in Chicago

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Release exposes Moscow's cover-up of 1957 nuclear disaster

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**—On the picket line, p. 5—**

Gov't presses frame-up of rail workers in Canada

Calif. Henkel workers continue strike for safety rights

# Volunteers make progress in putting 'Militant' online

BY RASHAAD ALI  
AND MIKE GALATI

For almost five years, supporters of the communist movement from around the world have been working together to make every volume of the *Militant* ever published available online through the *Militant*'s website. This effort has involved both scanning old copies of the paper and using digital copies from other online resources.

In both cases it meant creating PDF files of each issue that are attractive, easy to read, and whose headlines are searchable. This makes it possible to then create searchable indexes.

Creating an index takes substantially more time than making the PDF, but supporters are making important progress on this as well. Currently, every volume from the most recent back through the end of the 1980s has an index that can be searched on the website by subject, author or keywords. Eventually, every back issue of the paper will have such an index.

By the end of this year workers, youth and others looking to read and study the history of the Social-

ist Workers Party, the building of a world communist movement and to follow the development of working-class struggles, will be able to find every *Militant* volume from today back through the end of the 1940s. By the end of next year, every *Militant* volume ever printed will be available.

Having these issues online, in a form that can be easily accessed, read and searched, is an important contribution to making the revolutionary continuity of our movement available to a new generation of fighters.

## 'Militant' fights prison censorship in Florida

**Continued from front page**  
Political rights of prisoners are speaking out in support of the appeal.

"Workers behind bars have a constitutional right to read material of their choosing," wrote the New York Riverside Church Prison Ministry, calling on Florida officials to reverse the impoundments in a Nov. 27 letter to the Literature Review Committee. "To attempt to silence the *Militant*'s voice represents a danger to anyone who cares about freedom of thought, inquiry and expression."

According to Florida regulations, once one prison bans an issue, all the rest follow suit. The latest impoundment was ordered by officials at Jefferson Correctional Institution in Monticello. They claimed the *Militant* is "dangerously inflammatory in that it advocates or encourages riot, insurrection," and that it "encourages activities which may lead to the use of physical violence."



Above, May 25, 1946, issue of *Militant*. Inset, Mike Galati works as part of team making all *Militant* volumes available online by end of 2018.

The prison censors don't identify which articles they say offend their guidelines, but headlines on the four pages they cite demonstrate the absurdity of the charges:

"Protest US Economic War Against Cuban Revolution!" "GIs Come Back From Horrors of Imperialist War to Carnage at Home," "Don't Vote for Either the Democrats or Republicans," "Working-Class Solidarity Got Many Out of Harm's Way in Calif. Wildfire," "Walmart, Amazon Bosses Fight for Profits, Make Workers Pay," "Brigadistas Learn About Cuba, Organize to Defend Revolution" and "Oscar López: 'Cuba Gives Us Best Example of Resistance.'"

These pages also feature ads promoting a "Rally and march for silver miners on strike" in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and a "Rally to defend Cuban Revolution at the United Nations" in New York.

What is it here that prison officials consider "dangerously inflammatory?"

Florida officials also impounded the Oct. 30 issue, citing an article that reported on the *Militant*'s challenge to other issues of the paper they barred, even though the Literature Review Committee had said previous impoundments on this basis were invalid and ordered those issues delivered to inmate subscribers.

Over the last year the *Militant* has won broad support for its fight against censorship. Among the groups that have

spoken out are the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, PEN America, the National Lawyers Guild, Amnesty International USA and the American Friends Service Committee.

"In the midst of the deepening capitalist economic crisis, working people need a paper that tells the truth and that explains the need to unite and organize independently of the bosses' parties," *Militant* editor John Studer said. "Our fellow workers behind bars are part of this world. They have a right to read news about the deteriorating conditions workers face today and their efforts to change them, to consider different views and to form their own opinions."

"This is a question of the freedom of the press," Studer said, "and also of the basic human rights of prisoners." He called on all supporters of political rights to join the fight against censorship.

### How you can help:

Distribute *Militant* articles on this fight.

Get statements of support from unions, churches and defenders of workers rights and free speech. Send to: [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com)

Send a check to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018, earmarked "Prisoners Rights Fight."

## The Militant

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France: Send 120 euros for one year to Diffusion du *Militant*, BP 10130, 75723 Paris Cedex 15.

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Australia: Send A\$70 for one year to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

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# THE MILITANT

## Puerto Rico: Aid now! Cancel the debt!

**U.S. imperialism's colonial exploitation of Puerto Rico turned hurricanes Irma and Maria into a deep social crisis. Workers in the United States should stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico because our interests are the same. End U.S. colonial rule!**



Nov. 19 march in Washington, D.C., protesting U.S. colonial treatment of Puerto Rico.

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### NEW READERS

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# SWP expands reach of party

**Continued from front page**

ers bearing down on us today means many more people are looking for a working-class road forward. Some have begun to join in teams to their neighbors and elsewhere.

Members and supporters who work in retail and other industries were key to leading the drive forward, taking the paper, the books and the fund effort to co-workers, relatives, friends and neighbors.

The heart of the circulation drive was discussions with working people on their doorsteps to introduce the party, its press and books, and its working-class election campaigns against the Democrats and Republicans, the twin parties of the capitalist bosses.

Workers are angry at the disgust and disdain the propertied rulers have for us, and their thirst to learn about the underlying reasons for the carnage workers face — from joblessness to unending wars to spreading death and destruction from opioid addiction. We found many people who were open to revolutionary working-class politics.

## Workers want to continue discussion

Many of them want to continue the discussion and help to take it broader. John Staggs writes from Philadelphia about one of his co-workers who bought a *Militant* subscription also got a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. He wants to organize to get it into a book discussion club he's participating in.

Many not only wanted to sign up for subscriptions and dig into the party books, but were happy to donate to help fund the ongoing work of the SWP. In total we raised \$102,568, exceeding the Fall Fund goal of \$100,000. Every area went over the quota in full and on time. Co-workers and workers on their doorsteps kicked in hundreds of dollars.

Jacquie Henderson writes from Minneapolis that the fund collection there included "more than \$200 in new contributions, mostly \$5 and \$10, as we invited workers to see our party as their party." The final chart is below.

## Worldwide drive

The Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. participated in the circulation effort, meeting scores of new people and expanding the reach of communist literature.

## Socialist Workers Party Fund Drive

Sept. 16 - Nov. 21 - Final Chart

Area	Quota	Collected	%
Albany*	\$5,750	\$5,899	103%
Atlanta	\$11,200	\$11,307	101%
Chicago	\$12,000	\$12,515	104%
Colorado	\$700	\$700	100%
Lincoln	\$300	\$309	103%
Los Angeles*	\$10,000	\$10,004	100%
Miami	\$3,500	\$3,520	101%
New York	\$17,000	\$17,053	100%
Oakland	\$14,500	\$14,505	100%
Philadelphia	\$4,200	\$4,282	102%
Seattle	\$8,200	\$9,018	110%
Twin Cities	\$4,800	\$4,845	101%
Washington, DC	\$7,250	\$7,411	102%
Other	\$1,200	\$1,200	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100,600</b>	<b>\$102,568</b>	<b>102%</b>
<b>Should Be</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Raised Quota*</b>			

From London, Jonathan Silberman writes that a team of party members went door to door in the working-class area of Harlow, Essex. When Hugh Robertson knocked on Peter Baker's door, he explained the Communist League was there to present an independent working-class political outlook.

"Workers need our own party," Baker agreed, signing up for a subscription. "It's good to get a paper that tells workers' side of the story. I've always been suspicious of what I read in the 'mainstream' press."

"In the final two days of the drive, we visited with several workers who had asked us to come back after payday to get a subscription and/or a book," Edwin Fruit writes from Seattle. "We got one subscription from getting back together with someone who lives near a Walmart store south of Seattle, and sold a copy of *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* in Spanish to another worker we'd met in the same neighborhood."

Walmart worker Pat Scott signed up a neighbor for a *Militant* renewal and also sold a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* to a family friend.

Jeanne FitzMaurice visited a long-time co-worker originally from Africa who had expressed interest in several titles. In the end he got the *Workers Power* book, *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record* and *Are They Rich*



"Workers need our own party," Peter Baker, right, told Communist League member Hugh Robertson, as he signed up to get a *Militant* subscription Nov. 25 in Harlow, England.

*Because They're Smart?* all by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, and *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by party leader Mary-Alice Waters. He said he wants to read them all, and wants his sons to do the same.

These four books were among five offered with a special discount together with a subscription. The fifth was "*It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US Justice System*" written by the Cuban Five, Cuban revolutionaries who

were imprisoned for up to 16 years by Washington and freed through an international defense campaign.

The central goal of the drive was to strengthen the ability of the party to keep on doing the same thing 52 weeks a year — meeting more workers, expanding the reach of the party's press and books, laying the basis for the party to grow. We succeeded. And you can join in, just contact the party at the office nearest you listed on page 4.

## Tape shows Bundys acted to protect rights of all ranchers

BY DENNIS RICHTER  
AND WILLIAM ARTH

LAS VEGAS — The government frame-up trial of cattle rancher Cliven Bundy, his sons Ammon and Ryan Bundy, and supporter Ryan Payne entered day 12 in U.S. District Court here Nov. 27. Prosecutors put Bureau of Land Management agent Robert Shilaikis on the stand. The jury heard the secret government recording made by Shilaikis of a phone call between BLM agent Michael Johnson and Ryan Bundy on March 27, 2014. Johnson and Shilaikis were assigned to go to the Bundy ranch in Bunkerville to inform them the government planned to

move in and seize their cattle.

Government prosecutors played 13 minutes of conversation, arguing that this was the only part relevant to the charges. Under pressure, prosecutors agreed later to play the full 46 minutes.

In response to threats by agent Johnson to enforce court orders to confiscate the Bundy family cattle, Ryan Bundy said, "We will do whatever it takes to stop your gathering of our cattle." When Johnson pushes Bundy on what it would take to avoid a confrontation, he replied, "Don't come to take the cattle. We have the right to defend ourselves if you are taking our property. We don't claim ownership to the land, we

claim ownership to water rights, grazing rights and the ranching improvements."

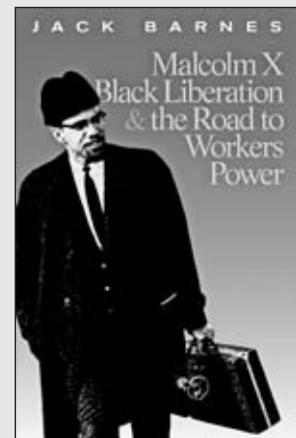
Despite Johnson's best efforts to get Bundy to say ranchers would respond with violence, he never does so.

Defense attorney Ryan Norwood reintroduced one segment from the BLM tape the next day, where Ryan Bundy says the Bundys met with hundreds of ranchers from throughout the region. "These ranchers believe that if we go down that they will be next. These ranchers will stand with us," Bundy says. "People in Japan, China, all over the world are interested in the issue of how the Bundys' rights will be handled."

## MILITANT SUBSCRIPTION & BOOK SPECIALS

**Malcolm X, Black Liberation,  
and the Road to Workers Power**  
by Jack Barnes

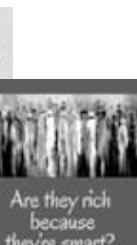
\$15. With subscription: \$10



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**Are They Rich Because They're Smart?**

Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism  
by Jack Barnes



**The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record**

Why Washington Fears Working People  
by Jack Barnes



**Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?**

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**"It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System"**

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**\$7 EACH WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION**

To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 4.

# Retail giants' competition spurs holiday job speedup

BY SETH GALINSKY

The big-business media are full of reports on how Black Friday sales show that things are looking up for retail store owners and e-commerce operators. Brick-and-mortar store sales didn't drop as much as they expected and online sales were booming, they say. "Black Friday Turnout the 'Best of the Last Few Years'" headlined the *New York Post*.

Shoppers spent \$5 billion in 24 hours, a 16.9 percent increase from last year, CNN reported, mostly due to online orders. Amazon, which dominates internet sales, said it sold over 200,000 toys in the first five hours on Black Friday.

Sales between Thanksgiving and Christmas — not counting groceries — account for as much as 40 percent of the annual income of retail businesses.

A closer look shows that the picture for retail bosses — and especially their workers — is not so rosy. Walmart, Amazon's main competitor, boosted its internet sales, largely by matching Amazon prices or undercutting them. Walmart's profit margins have declined four quarters in a row.

A key way the retail giants are trying to cut their costs is by tightening the screws on workers.

Retailers report they added some half

million temporary workers for this holiday season — 120,000 of them at Amazon in 30 states, mostly in their distribution centers. This is the lowest number since at least 2003, with the exception of the two years following the world financial crisis that began in 2007.

## Grueling conditions for workers

Walmart slowed the pace of seasonal hiring this year and has cut many positions, making its employees work longer hours and sometimes six days a week.

In another cost-cutting move, Walmart Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs said that the company hopes to save \$20 million a year by using smaller plastic shopping bags. Store cashiers say the bags break more easily, making work harder, at the same time as the bosses press workers to speed up.

Amazon refused a request by Jacksonville Action News in Florida to visit their distribution center there, after workers told them the pace was brutal.

Workers are constantly monitored by supervisors for speed and accuracy, Action News said. "We had a girl get written up for that, for taking too many bathroom breaks," one worker told the TV station. And for breaks, "you have to take that 10-15 minute walk down stairs



AP Photo/Gunnar Rathbun

Customers at Walmart in Bentonville, Arkansas, kick off holiday shopping Nov. 23. Sales between Thanksgiving and Christmas account for up to 40 percent of annual income in retail.

and then clock out," she said. That time is counted as part of their break.

Amazon, like other retailers, has automated, computerized and robotized as much of their operation as they can to ramp up output per worker.

The *Mirror* newspaper sent its reporter Alan Selby undercover to work in the Amazon warehouse in Tilbury, England. Selby found workers were required to pack and seal one order every 30 seconds. He was told the quota would be raised to 200 items an hour.

Besides squeezing their workers more, Walmart, grocery giant Kroger

Co. and other large retail companies are putting it to their suppliers, who in turn come down on their workers. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Nov. 27 that Kroger is fining suppliers \$500 for every order that arrives more than two days late at its 42 warehouses. Walmart is charging suppliers monthly fines of 3 percent for deliveries that don't arrive exactly on time, including if they arrive too early or aren't complete.

One of the biggest losers has been 130-year-old Sears, the largest retail chain until 1989, when Walmart overtook it. In a bid to stave off bankruptcy, Sears has been selling off its most profitable assets, such as the Craftsman tools brand. Sales still dropped in half from \$53 billion in 2006 to just \$25.1 billion in 2015, and they're still falling.

But don't worry, rich coupon clippers still hope to make a bundle on retail stores. In November, two new Exchange-Traded Funds were launched — "Decline of the Retail Stores ETF" and the "Long Online Short Stores ETF." Well-heeled investors, lacking profitable opportunities to put their cash into increasing production and trade, can bet their bucks that brick-and-mortar stores are going down the tubes and online outfits will keep rising. If they bet right, they make money.

As retail bosses push workers to try to maintain profit levels, they'll face a reaction. Some 2,500 workers went on strike at six Amazon distribution centers in Germany and one in Italy on Black Friday, demanding "dignified salaries." In Berlin, workers held a banner that read, "Make Amazon Pay! We Are Humans Not Robots or Data."

## 19 victims of cop frame-ups exonerated in Chicago

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO — Within the course of one week in mid-November 19 men framed up and convicted on a variety of crimes had those convictions thrown out after the Cook County State's Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit urged courts to overturn them, shining a spotlight on the class bias of the so-called criminal "justice" system.

All 19 were from working-class neighborhoods in Chicago, all either African-American or Latino. And all but two were victims of what is proven to be a common practice by Chicago cops and others across the country — the use of coercion, from psychological abuse to torture, to elicit false confessions or create "testimony" to convict people of crimes they did not commit.

According to data compiled by the National Registry of Exonerations, at least 146 people had been freed from prison after being framed up and convicted by cops and prosecutors in Cook County. Many spent decades behind bars. The 19 released this week make the total 165.

On Nov. 14, Arthur Brown, 66, was released from prison after 29 years, convicted of murder based on a false confession that cops beat him into signing.

The following day Jose Maysonet, 49, was released after 27 years in prison for murder. After his conviction was overturned, prosecutors put him back on trial, but five retired cops refused to testify, invoking the constitutional protection against self-incrimination. Among the five cops was Reynaldo Guevara. Numerous convictions in which he played a role were overturned because he beat suspects and coerced witnesses.

On Nov. 16 the Cook County State's Attorney threw out the drug-related convictions of 15 men. They were framed by police Sgt. Ronald Watts and his crew. Watts and an officer under his command were sent to federal prison

in 2013 for stealing money from a drug courier working as an FBI informant.

Speaking at a news conference, Joshua Tepfer, the Exoneration Project's lead attorney for the 15, said that Watts and his associates were involved in as many as 500 convictions.

Also addressing the media was Leonard Gipson, one of the 15 exonerees, who described how Watts framed him on drug charges in 2003 because he refused to pay him "protection" money. After Gipson filed a false-arrest complaint against Watts, the cop framed him up again on heroin-related drug charges. He spent two years in jail awaiting trial, finally yielding to the advice of his attorney and pleading guilty.

The day these convictions were thrown out, the Chicago Police Department put seven cops who had been associated with Watts on desk duty. A police spokesperson claimed the department

would investigate their conduct.

Then on Nov. 21 Nevest Coleman and Darryl Fulton were released from prison after new DNA evidence cleared them of 1994 rape and murder convictions that had kept them incarcerated for 23 years.

The Exoneration Project and others continue to press to absolve and win freedom for hundreds of others framed up by Reynaldo Guevara, Watts and his associates, infamous former Chicago Police Department detective Jon Burge and his "midnight crew," and other cops.

"For 19 people to be exonerated in less than a week is great," Esther Hernandez, mother of both Juan and Rosendo Hernandez, who were framed up for murder and attempted murder in 1997, told the *Militant*. "But it also shows the scope of the problem. It's not just Burge or Watts or Guevara. It's how the cops and the justice system work."

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# Gov't presses frame-up of rail workers in Canada

BY JOHN STEELE

SHERBROOKE, Quebec — Stephen Callaghan, a self-styled rail safety expert and the prosecution's star witness, took the stand Nov. 21 in the Canadian government and rail bosses' frame-up against locomotive engineer Tom Harding. Harding is charged with 47 counts of criminal negligence causing death flowing from the July 2013 oil train derailment and explosion that killed 47 people and burned out Lac-Mégantic's downtown core.

On trial with Harding, a member of United Steelworkers Local 1976, is train controller Richard Labrie, a fellow union member, as well as former low-level Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway operations manager Jean Demaitre. If declared guilty they could face life in prison.

Callaghan is a former inspector for the federal Transportation Safety Board. He also was a supervisor for the Quebec, North Shore and Labrador Railway, where he helped implement, for the first time in Canada, one-person "crew" operations. The only other railroad to get dispensation from the government to do so was Montreal, Maine and Atlantic.

Following the Lac-Mégantic disaster, Callaghan was hired by the Que-

bec provincial cops to investigate. The charges against Harding, Labrie and Demaitre were based on his report.

Accompanied by charts, graphs and photographs, Callaghan told the jury that the disaster was caused by Harding's failure to activate a sufficient number of handbrakes before he left the train unattended.

Harding had driven the 72-car oil tanker train and parked on the main line in Nantes, as was the normal procedure on a grade above Lac-Mégantic. As he had done many times before, he set a number of hand brakes — he said he set seven that evening — and left the lead locomotive running with its independent air brakes on, confident the combination meant the train was well secured.

While Harding slept, a fire broke out in the stack of the lead engine. Volunteer firefighters turned off the locomotive to douse the flames. They left when a Montreal, Maine and Atlantic official on the scene told them that everything was in order. Harding, who was called about the fire, volunteered to come back and make sure everything was OK. He was told that was not necessary and he should go back to sleep. With the locomotive engine shut down, its air brakes bled out, and



Unionist Tom Harding, right, with lawyer Thomas Walsh, at opening of frame-up trial Oct. 2.

the train rolled down the hill into Lac-Mégantic, derailed and exploded.

Wakened by the explosion, Harding risked his life to help firefighters detach and move a number of tanker cars before they could explode. Many in Lac-Mégantic consider Harding a hero and are convinced that the top bosses of now defunct Montreal, Maine and Atlantic should have been charged — along with high officials of Ottawa's agency Transport Canada, who had OK'd one-person operation and the erosion of safety on the rail line to boost company profits.

## Evolution of the frame-up

Immediately after the disaster Montreal, Maine and Atlantic top boss Ed

Burkhardt said Harding had done everything properly. Another company official called him a hero and described him as a "very conscientious person." But a few days later the frame-up began, and Burkhardt accused Harding of not setting enough hand brakes.

In May 2014, guided by Callaghan's investigative "report," which left Burkhardt and the rest of the rail bosses free of blame, the Quebec police tactical squad, with guns drawn, descended on Harding's home in Farnham, arrested him and paraded him in handcuffs into the court in Lac-Mégantic.

But the Transportation Safety Board's own independent report concluded that no single person caused the tragedy and that some 18 different factors, including Montreal, Maine and Atlantic safety negligence, contributed to what happened. Rail bosses attacked the report — including then Canadian Pacific CEO Hunter Harrison, who insisted the Transportation Safety Board "overreacted" and that Harding alone was responsible.

Under cross-examination by Thomas Walsh, Harding's lawyer, Callaghan was forced to admit that the use of air brakes to back up hand brakes is a normal and widespread practice by locomotive engineers.

When presiding Quebec Superior  
Continued on page 7

## Calif. Henkel workers continue strike for safety

BY NORTON SANDLER

BAY POINT, Calif. — "Management doesn't care about safety, we don't get the respect we deserve," Felix Rivera, one of the striking members of International Association of Machinists Local 1584 at Henkel Aerospace, told the *Militant* as he picketed outside the plant here Nov. 25.

"It seems like the company really isn't negotiating in good faith," added John McFarland, a production worker with three years at the plant. "It comes down to they're trying to break us."

The bitter strike began Oct. 16. This plant, a subsidiary of Henkel AG & Co., based in Germany, manufactures aerospace adhesives used by Boeing, Spirit Airlines, F3 and other companies, workers say. Bosses in Germany reported Henkel's third-quarter net profits rose 7.1 percent this year.

The Machinists union was won here in a 2013 strike after David Eleidjian was crushed and killed after being pulled into a mixing machine in the plant. The company was cited for safety violations and fined over \$200,000.

Brian Fealy, an IAM business representative, told the *Militant* that there have been three major injuries over the past year from steam burns.

The IAM unionists maintain their pickets 14 hours daily. Only seven of the 80 workers at the plant have crossed the line in six weeks, strikers said. The company is busing in 20 to 30 professional strikebreakers every day, from the notorious Minnesota-based union-busting outfit Strom Engineering.

Derion Oliver started working at Henkel in July. "Boom, I'm on strike," he said. "This work is dangerous. I sometimes work 60 hours in a week around hazardous chemicals."

Company bosses terminated strikers' health care Nov. 1, including for

four workers on disability from injuries on the job.

Striker Anthony Tatum, with three years at the plant, expressed frustration over the company's stalling on a settlement. "I'm ready to go back to work," he said. "We should be back."

"There was mediation last week, and we were making progress on the contract language on advancements, safety and grievances," Fealy said. "But when the discussion focused on back-to-work language, they basically walked out of the mediator's office."

Steve Older, another union official,

said the bosses want to victimize strikers and keep the strikebreakers. "They want us to return on the company's schedule, they want the ability to impose picket line discipline that is not subject to the grievance procedure or arbitration. It's the company's word, that's it," Older said. "They also want to keep these professional scabs in the plant, not subject to union jurisdiction for six months."

"We have to have the scabs go, and amnesty on the line," Fealy said.

Donations and messages of support can be sent to IAM Local 1584, 436 McCormick St., San Leandro, CA 94577.

## — 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



December 11, 1992

LOS ANGELES — California drywall construction workers won a union contract November 13 after being on strike for five months. The agreement, signed by 49 contractors and the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, provides for union recognition, hiring to be done through the union hall on a rotating basis, medical insurance, and a pay scale. With an estimated 4,000 drywall hangers in southern California, the struggle was the largest union organizing drive occurring in the United States.

The victory was the result of daily mass picketing that involved thousands of drywall workers throughout southern California. Hundreds of workers mobilized in demonstrations against police attacks and several deportations of strikers carried out by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.



December 11, 1967

NEW YORK — Students at New York University scored a victory over Dow Chemical Company recruiters, who have been trying to get students to work for the napalm-making outfit. The NYU student government had passed a resolution stating that all recruiters on campus would have to be willing to debate students.

Dow agreed to send a person to debate. At the meeting students asked him to justify the use of napalm against the population of Vietnam. The chairman of the meeting said, "Now you know he has no answer to that question."

The next day, about 200 students and faculty gathered in the Placement Center of NYU to further question the Dow recruiter. They jammed the hallways and held a free-speech debate with those both for and against the war speaking out. The recruiter refused to take part. At noon, the Dow man left.



December 12, 1942

Sweeping dictatorial authority to control the destinies of America's millions of workers was granted to War Manpower Commissioner Paul V. McNutt, in an executive order issued by President Roosevelt on December 5.

The presidential decree, setting McNutt up as the virtual czar over labor in this country, opens the way toward the totalitarian regimentation of the people.

By the provision of the presidential decree McNutt has the power to shift workers from job to job, to force workers to migrate from one area to another, and to send workers from the cities into the country to perform agricultural labor.

The executive order states: "No employer shall retain in his employ any worker whose services are more urgently needed in any plant, facility, occupation or area designated by the chairman (McNutt)."

# Release exposes Moscow's ongoing cover-up of 1957 nuclear disaster

BY TERRY EVANS

Weeks after Russian authorities denied French nuclear agency reports of high levels of radiation coming from the Urals, Russia's weather service finally admitted that radioactive contamination — 986 times the norm — was registered at Argayash, near the Mayak nuclear waste processing plant in September. And it spread "exceptionally high" levels of radiation over Ukraine and other parts of Europe.

"Nobody tells us anything. They keep it secret," Lilia Galimzhanova, a cook from Argayash, told the *Financial Times*. She learned about the reports of high radiation levels from a friend in Germany. For decades after its construction in the 1940s the nuclear plant at Mayak was not even supposed to exist.

Prior to admitting the radiation levels, Russian authorities had urged residents to stay indoors to avoid what they claimed was "local factory pollution." Rosatom, the state-owned company operating the Mayak facility, continued to denounce reports of radiation leaks coming from Russia as "baseless" in October.

The radioactive material that leaked is ruthenium-106, which doesn't occur naturally. It's produced in processing nuclear fuel.

The Russian authorities' indifference to the lives of people near the plant goes back decades and is marked by a series of cover-ups. An explosion occurred at the Mayak plant in 1957 that released more radiation than any other nuclear disaster except Chernobyl and Fukushima. It was not acknowledged until the late 1980s.

Doctors in the area around Mayak were not allowed to report cancer as a cause of death on death certificates there and were prevented from mentioning radiation sickness in their di-

agnosis of patients, instead referring to it as the "special disease."

In 1993 Russian authorities conceded that some 450,000 people were exposed to harmful levels of radiation from the 1957 explosion, other leaks at the plant and the dumping of nuclear waste into water supplies. Officials at the plant have admitted that they were still dumping nuclear waste into local rivers in 2004.

## Rising birth defects and cancers

In 2016 doctors recorded rates of birth defects and cancers vastly higher than Russian averages in villages along the Techa River where plant bosses had dumped the waste. It took state officials until 2008 — two decades after admitting that authorities at the Mayak site had been responsible for radioactive poisoning — to evacuate people living in the area.

Moscow's efforts to block questions about what occurred at Mayak are an eerie reminder of their contempt for working people shown during the world's worst nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in 1986. There the authorities of the former Soviet Union refused to admit the extent of the disaster, evacuate people living in the area or prevent residents from consuming contaminated local produce.

Relief for working people affected by the deadly radiation at Chernobyl came when the revolutionary government of Cuba offered to provide treatment in Cuba for all those who wanted it. For over 20 years, more than 25,000 Ukrainian youth received free medical care at Tarará, a special facility for treating illnesses and cancers from the Chernobyl disaster.

## Celebrate life of Armando Hart, leader of Cuban Revolution



Ismael Francisco/Cubadebate

Armando Hart, a founding member of the July 26 Movement and long-time leader of the Cuban Revolution, died Nov. 26 in Havana. He was 87 years old.

Above, Hart, seated, meets with Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Nov. 13 during López's trip to Cuba. At far right is Fernando González, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples and former cellmate of López after being imprisoned in the U.S. as one of the Cuban Five.

As a member of the Federation of University Students, Hart got involved in the struggle against Fulgencio Batista, who came to power in a coup in 1952. The revolutionary forces Hart was part of fused with the movement headed by Fidel Castro in 1955. "I can affirm that my life is divided into two fundamental stages," Hart said last year. "Before and after meeting Fidel Castro."

In his book, *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952-58: A Participant's Account*, available at pathfinderpress.com, Hart describes how under the leadership of Castro, working people and youth initiated the political struggle that in less than a decade brought down the bloody, U.S.-backed dictatorship.

Hart was one of the national organizers of the July 26 Movement's urban underground, and became its national coordinator. He was imprisoned several times in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow Batista. After the revolution triumphed in 1959, Hart was named minister of education, and he directed the mass literacy campaign of 1961 that mobilized Cuban youth to spread throughout city and countryside to eliminate illiteracy. From 1976 to 1997 he was the minister of culture. He was a member of Political Bureau of the Communist Party from 1965, when the party was formed, through 1991.

"He leaves an extraordinary example of loyalty, selflessness and adherence to principles," Cuban Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel said at a Nov. 27 ceremony in his honor.

The *Militant* will publish an article on Hart's contributions to the revolution in an upcoming issue.

— SETH GALINSKY

## 'In Cuba there's a lot of solidarity, you feel relaxed'

BY RÓGER CALERO

NEW YORK — "I've never seen anything like it! It was very impressive to see how officials came to assist those who needed to evacuate from less secured homes," Luisa Coxall told me when she came back from Cuba. She described how the revolutionary government there organized the massive evacuation of 1.7 million people before the devastating landfall of Hurricane Irma Sept. 9. Coxall is a Cuban-American from Brooklyn who was visiting relatives in Havana when the storm hit.

"Buses and trucks came to pick up people, along with their belongings, and they all knew where they were going," she said. "They only have six television channels, but they kept people informed — calmly and accurately — at every stage of the hurricane."

She described how the civil defense workers came "down to each block in the neighborhood."

I met Coxall in 2015 when we both joined a march here to protest the cop killing of Eric Garner in Staten Island. She's a hospital worker, a member of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 for 26 years, who is now retired. This was her first

extended visit back to Cuba since she came to the U.S. in 1966 as a child.

She said it was a revelation to see how working people in Cuba use their mass organizations — with the full support of their government — to advance their society and to mobilize to preserve human life when hurricanes or other natural disasters strike.

I said that this, along with the other accomplishments of the socialist revolution in Cuba, are living proof that working people can unite, organize, fight and transform ourselves as we participate in struggles. It's the road workers and farmers in Cuba have been on since January 1959 when they took political power from the capitalist rulers and began building a society based on human solidarity.

She described other everyday experiences she witnessed during her stay that really had an impact on her. "I went to a dental clinic," said Coxall. "Don't expect to find a chair like the ones you see here in the United States, where they press a button and it moves up and down. No, they have to crank it up into position with a pedal. But the care was good, and it was free of charge."

"The doctor addresses you by first

name, and with respect," she said. "And they don't lie to you about what you need to have done, because it's not about money, they're not going to charge you."

Cubans don't have medical insurance because health care is free and available to all.

"My sister got a beautiful set of new dentures for 20 Cuban pesos — less than one dollar!" she said, still in disbelief at the contrast with life under the capitalist profit system in the U.S.

"I saw a lot of solidarity. The neighbors look after each other, you feel relaxed," she said, "You don't have the shootings we have here. You can walk at night safely anywhere."

"And I did," she said with a smile.

## — CALENDAR —

### ILLINOIS

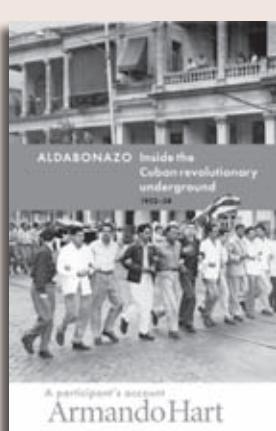
#### Chicago

**Cuba's International Literacy Campaign for Human Liberation.** Speaker: Griselda Aguilera Cabrera, Cuban literacy teacher, one of the youngest during 1961 nationwide campaign. "Maestra" film will also be shown. Sat., Dec. 2, 6 p.m. Donation: \$5 SEIU Healthcare, 2229 S. Halsted. Sponsor: Chicago Cuba Coalition.

## Aldabonazo

Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground 1952-58

A Participant's Account  
by Armando Hart



In this account we meet many of the men and women of the July 26 Movement who with courage, audacity and ever-increasing political clarity led the revolutionary struggle in Cuba's cities and towns. \$25  
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# US, Beijing rivalry in Africa

Continued from front page

there face the consequences of a decadeslong capitalist economic crisis, a product of both the worldwide capitalist contraction and disastrous policies by Mugabe's government designed to enrich his family and allies. In the midst of uncontrollable inflation in 2009 the government abandoned the currency, the Zimbabwe dollar. While the U.S. dollar replaced it in larger-scale commerce, for the overwhelming majority of Zimbabwe's people barter became the norm. Over 90 percent of Zimbabwean toilers live outside what the government calls its "formal economy."

A day prior to Mnangagwa's inauguration, the International Monetary Fund warned the new government would have to pay its arrears to imperialist financial institutions on its debt, before further credit would be extended.

The IMF — which exists to enforce the dictates of Washington and other imperialist powers — specializes in imposing "tough love" on regimes that fall behind in payments to their bondholders, demanding they find the funds owed by taking them out of the hides of working people. The government of Zimbabwe owes \$550 million to the IMF, \$1.126 billion to the World Bank, \$529 million to the African Development Bank and \$221 million to the European Investment Bank.

## Beijing propped up Mugabe gov't

Beijing had helped prop up the Mugabe government, with over \$1 billion in low-interest loans between 2010 and 2015, when Washington, London and other imperialist powers sought to isolate the country. As the economic crisis deepened, the *Wall Street Journal* reports Beijing at the end of 2015 refused further assistance and urged Mugabe to rely on deals with the IMF.

The Chinese government's connections to Zanu-PF go back to the liberation struggle that brought down the British-backed white-minority government in what they called Rhodesia. The party, one wing of the anti-colonial movement that led the country to independence in 1980, got weapons and training from Beijing and was politically influenced by the Stalinist leadership of the Chinese

Communist Party in power at the time.

Under Mugabe's leadership, the newly independent government embarked on an anti-working-class course, unleashing a rule of terror on political opponents and on the Ndebele peoples in the west of the country, killing tens of thousands. Zanu-PF was based largely among Mugabe's Shona people, a majority of the country's population.

## Beijing and Zimbabwe

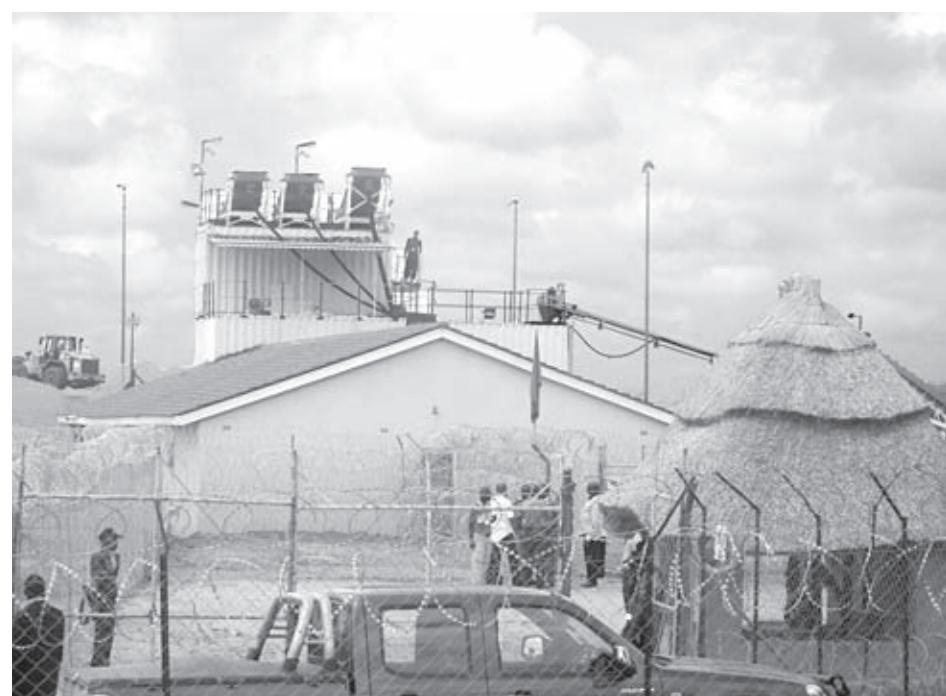
Beijing swiftly congratulated Mnangagwa on his appointment. The rulers in China are concerned first and foremost with defending their position in Africa and their expanding economic clout. "Chinese investment in Zimbabwe has also fallen victim to Mugabe's policy and some projects were forced to close down or move to other countries in recent years, bringing huge losses," wrote the Chinese state newspaper *Global Times* Nov. 17. "Bilateral cooperation did not realize its potential under Mugabe's rule."

The massive development of Chinese industry over three decades has driven capitalists there to expand their interests worldwide, including in Zimbabwe and other African nations. They seek political influence and access to markets and raw materials.

Chinese trade with African nations rose 20-fold between 2000 and 2014. Chinese companies have sought to extract cobalt, oil, copper, iron ore and uranium from countries across the continent. And they are also building roads and other infrastructure and setting up factories, adding to the rising numbers of African toilers drawn off the land. The accompanying expansion of the working class in Africa is an important social advance and a token for the future. Over time this fuels class antagonisms.

Beijing extended substantial loans and aid to the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe to build infrastructure and extend the potential for production and trade. They sold arms and invested in diamond and gold mines, construction and agricultural production.

Investment from China topped \$450 million in 2015 — more than half of all foreign investment in the



Mine in eastern Zimbabwe Marange diamond fields. After discovery of diamonds, government drove local workers from area in 2008, granting mining licenses to Chinese companies. Beijing has expanded loans, investment, trade in Zimbabwe and other African nations in recent years.

country. Beijing also bought up some 28 percent of all the country's exports that year, including 54 percent of its tobacco production.

What Chinese rulers are doing in Zimbabwe fits with other trade deals and infrastructure projects across Africa. Recently completed and projected Chinese rail construction would link several east and central African nations.

As it is drawn deeper into economic and social conflict on the continent, Beijing seeks to protect its

interests by expanding its military footprint. Chinese capitalists bought oil fields in Sudan prior to the 2013 civil war there. As the conflict unfolded, Beijing sent an infantry battalion to newly independent South Sudan. This summer Beijing opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti.

While Washington remains the dominant imperialist economic and military power on the planet, Beijing is expanding its reach across Africa and Asia.



Map of Chinese-funded rail line connecting port of Djibouti, also site of newly opened Chinese military base, with Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. This is one of several rail construction projects initiated by Beijing in East Africa aimed at expanding its trade and investment.

## Canada rail workers face frame-up

Continued from page 5

Court Judge Gaétan Dumas asked Callaghan if he knew what caused the fire in the lead locomotive, the "expert" said he didn't know. But the Transportation Safety Board report said explicitly that the locomotive caught fire because of substandard rail company repairs.

A number of people from Lac-Mégantic have come to sit in on the trial, including leaders of the Citizens' Coalition for Rail Safety. "The Transportation Safety Board report shows that Harding was not responsible for what happened," Robert Bellefleur, the spokesperson for the coalition who was at Callaghan's testimony, told the *Militant*. "There is still a lot of suffering in Lac-Mégantic, and those responsible are not in court."

The Transportation Safety Board report is the elephant in the courtroom, because it cannot be referred to

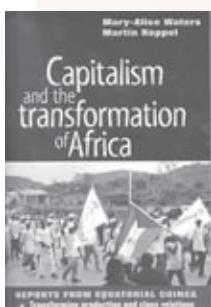
in front of the jury. In a pretrial hearing, Judge Dumas rejected without explanation a motion requesting the report be submitted as evidence for the defense, and denied the defense the right to subpoena safety board investigators.

The trial will continue into January 2018. "As the trial unfolds, we will bring more of the truth to light so the jury has a chance to assess the big picture," Walsh told the *Militant*.

Messages in support of Harding and Labrie should be sent to USW Local 1976/Section locale 1976, 2360 De Lasalle, Suite 202, Montreal, QC Canada H1V 2L1. Copies should be sent to Thomas Walsh, 165 Rue Wellington N., Suite 310, Sherbrooke, QC Canada J1H 5B9. Email: thomaspwalsh@hotmail.com.

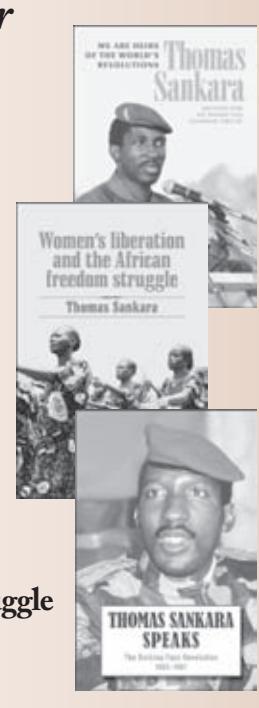
Marie-Claire David and Michel Prairie contributed to this article.

## Further Reading from Pathfinder



### Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa

by Mary-Alice Waters and Martín Koppel  
Reports from Equatorial Guinea: Transforming production and class relations; Expansion of the working class; The Cuban Revolution's internationalist road.  
In English, Spanish, Farsi. \$10



### Thomas Sankara Speaks

The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-1987  
In English and French. \$24

### We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions

In English, French, Spanish, Farsi. \$10

### Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle

In English, French, Spanish, Farsi. \$8

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# No deportations! Amnesty now!

We urge all working people to speak out against the U.S. government's decision to eliminate Temporary Protected Status for Haitians and Nicaraguans, and to demand they drop consideration of similar expulsion of Salvadorans and Hondurans. This decision will force tens of thousands of workers to leave the U.S. or face deportation. This attempt to divide and weaken the working class must be opposed.

Join and help build the national rally against these anti-working-class moves Dec. 6 in Washington, D.C.!

TPS, as the status is commonly known, was not granted because of the humanitarian concerns of the ruling class. It was begun in 1990 because the propertied rulers worried that the deportation of thousands to Haiti, El Salvador and Honduras would destabilize U.S.-backed regimes and threaten U.S. capitalist investments in the midst of the severe social and economic crises there.

By making the status temporary, they hoped to keep immigrants under TPS in a precarious posi-

tion, willing to accept lower wages, wary of joining unions, and to use them along with others without permanent papers to drive down the wages of all. By making the suspension of deportation temporary, but renewable, they hoped to undercut any movement to fight for amnesty.

U.S.- and foreign-born workers work side by side in the same factories today, we send our children to the same schools, and have done so for years. There is less anti-immigrant prejudice in the working class than ever before. We face the same bosses, who push down our wages, speed up the pace of work and cut corners on safety in an effort to boost their profits.

This is a life-and-death question for the working class. We need to unite and speak out, "We don't care where you were born, what language you speak, what color your skin is. Let's stand up and fight together!"

Amnesty for immigrant workers in the U.S. now! Stop the deportations!

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## Seeds of more Mideast conflict in Syria, Iraq

**Continued from front page**

from Washington, has taken steps to stabilize this "soft partition" of Syria for now. Several "de-escalation zones" have been set up by Ankara, Moscow and Tehran.

Tehran — the biggest victor in the Syria, Iraq wars so far — has moved to consolidate a land route across Syria and Iraq that connects Iran and Hezbollah-controlled areas in Lebanon. They face growing challenges from Saudi Arabia's rulers and their backers in Washington and Tel Aviv.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking to stabilize this reality, for now. Assad flew to Moscow to meet with Putin Nov. 21, telling Putin that Russian military intervention was "saving Syria."

The following day Putin hosted a meeting with the Iranian and Turkish presidents, Hassan Rouhani and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who announced their backing for the Russian president's proposed "Syrian People's Congress," to be held in Sochi. No firm date has been set for the gathering.

However, conflicting interests between Washington, Moscow, Tehran, Saudi Arabia's rulers and other capitalist regimes in the region continue to threaten more conflict. Damascus has said its next target is the Kurds, who have carved out an autonomous region in northeastern Syria, and with their allies in the SDF, control a swath of territory from Raqqa east toward Iraq that contains some of Syria's largest oil fields.

Tehran and Ankara both back Assad's threats. Turkish media report that President Donald Trump told Erdogan that he plans to stop sending weapons to the Syrian Kurds, and may ask them to return heavy artillery "loaned" to them earlier.

### Assad regime bombs Damascus suburb

The crisis that led to the civil war in Syria remains unsolved. Assad's regime has been bombarding towns and villages in the rebel-held Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta — one of the de-escalation zones. Some 400,000 people live there. Syrian forces have held these towns under siege since 2013, resulting in famine and devastation. Children's malnutrition levels there, the U.N. reported Nov. 29, are "the highest ever recorded in Syria" and one-third are "stunted."

Weeklong airstrikes and mortar attacks against Eastern Ghouta killed more than 118 civilians as of Nov. 21, Dr. Faiz Orabi, a spokesman for the area's health directorate, told the *Wall Street Journal*. Three hospitals were also struck.

Most residents see no alternative to staying put, regardless how bad things are. "Where are all the people going to go? To homes that aren't theirs? To tent camps?" Anas Al-Khole, a journalist and government opponent in Eastern Ghouta, told the *Journal*. "Most of the people say that death is more merciful than leaving my home."

Since 2011, some 75,000 people arrested by the gov-



Assad regime bombs, starves population of Eastern Ghouta, Syria, Nov. 26.

ernment have been "disappeared" and at least 26,446 children are recorded as killed, a vast majority by government forces, reported the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

### Assad regime targets Syrian Kurds

The Assad regime is taking aim at the Syrian Kurds, who are seeking to establish an autonomous region in northern Syria. Assad regime officials say they plan to oust the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces "occupiers" from territory in Raqqa and parts of Deir el-Zour province.

"I believe what happened in Iraq must become a lesson to the SDF," Syrian presidential adviser Bouthaina Shaaban said Nov. 7, referring to the attacks by Iraqi forces and Iranian-backed Hashd al-Shaabi militia on Kurdistan Regional Government territory following the referendum there for independence.

Turkish President Erdogan, who once railed against Assad's rule, now says he's for cooperating with Assad in rolling back gains won by the Kurdish YPG in Syria. The Turkish rulers fear the impact that an autonomous Kurdish region along Syria's northern border with Turkey will have on inspiring the fight by some 15 million Kurds in Turkey against national oppression and for their own homeland.

"There is a concept of a new war against the Kurds in all four parts of Kurdistan that aims to annihilate all the gains Kurdish people have made in recent years," said Feleknas Uca of the Kurdish-based People's Democratic Party (HDP) at a rally in Van, Turkey, Nov. 25.

More than 30 million Kurdish people — the world's largest nationality without their own state — live in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. The rulers in all these countries oppose any moves toward Kurdish independence or autonomy.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon "is likely to announce" that Washington has about 2,000 troops in Syria, two U.S. officials told Reuters Nov. 24. Before this, Washington had only admitted to having 503 U.S. troops there, as well as 5,262 in Iraq. And they aren't going anywhere soon.

## US to expel immigrants

**Continued from front page**

Sudan and South Sudan are also in limbo.

The Obama administration extended protected status to immigrants from Haiti after an earthquake there in 2010 killed more than 300,000 people and left 1.5 million homeless. It was renewed three times since, as the Haitian people faced a cholera outbreak that killed 9,000 and sickened more than 800,000, and was hit by Hurricane Matthew in 2016, killing over 1,000 people and devastating much of the country.

Duke, who was appointed by President Donald Trump, claimed the situation in Haiti has improved and Haitians living in the U.S. can return to their homeland. Many in the Haitian community in South Florida dispute that. Thousands have established families and lives here and would return to a country they know little about.

"There's no way that Haiti is ready to receive 60,000 of us," Joseph Audain told the *Militant*. He manages a small assisted-living facility and has lived and worked here for 30 years. "Haiti had two major hurricanes after the earthquake in 2010, there's no recovery from anything."

"There's not one Haitian who won't be affected by this decision if it goes through," he said, because "we don't just take, we give." Many Haitians in Florida send substantial amounts of remittances to family members in Haiti.

Without this — one of the single largest sources of income in the impoverished country — greater hardships will come down on working people there.

Protests against ending Temporary Protected Status have been building over several months. A demonstration in front of the Citizenship and Immigration Services office here May 13 drew hundreds to protest the threat of deportations if TPS is not renewed.

In response to Duke's Nov. 20 announcement, hundreds gathered the following day to protest near Mar-a-Lago, President Trump's private beach club, in Palm Beach. Trump was scheduled to spend Thanksgiving there. The protest included members of the UNITE HERE union from around the state, which organizes hospitality workers, many of whom are Haitian; Service Employees International Union; and the Guatemalan-Maya Center.

"What do we want? Residence! When do we want it? Now!" marchers chanted.

Many U.S. Congress members from south Florida — both Democrats and Republicans — have spoken against the decision to revoke the protected status. Miami Republican Rep. Carlos Curbelo and others have submitted a bill called Extending Status Protection for Eligible Refugees with Established Residence, or Esperer, French for "hope," that would allow people admitted under TPS to apply for permanent residence.

At the time of a May decision extending TPS for Haitians for only six months, Cynthia Jaquith, then Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Miami, issued a statement protesting the attack on TPS.

"We stand in solidarity with Haitians in the United States who face the threat of deportation when the TPS extension expires," Jaquith said. "The conditions in Haiti today are important, but not our starting point. We in the Socialist Workers Party call for amnesty for all immigrants in the U.S. — that everyone here, regardless of the circumstances under which they came, should be able to live and work without fear of deportation, criminal prosecution or denial of social services."

"The bosses use immigration status as a wedge to heighten divisions among working people here," she added. "That's why all unions should denounce the threat to end TPS. This is what is needed to unite the working class in a common fight against the bosses."

### Join national protest against attacks on DACA and end of TPS!

Amnesty for immigrant workers!

Stop the deportations!

**Washington, D.C.  
Dec. 6, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

For more information contact:  
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